MD's Oyster EIS Public Scoping Meeting
February 5, 2004

(Summary prepared by Tom O'Connell, MD DNR, Fisheries Service)

Attendance: There were approximately 80 people in attendance. Given the size of the audience it was difficult to get an accurate idea on who was all there, but there appeared to be good representation from the Federal governmental agencies, industry, conservation groups, and interested citizens. The Corps' sign-in sheet will provide an accurate accounting of how many people attended and their representation.

Summary: The format was consistent with the VA meeting, 25 minute presentation on the status of the resource and restoration efforts, states' proposal and schedule, preliminary list of alternatives, and EIS process. Then the group was divided into five smaller break-out groups, each consisting of approximately 15 individuals, that were facilitated. Each break-out group was given one hour to provide comments on the proposal, alternatives, schedule and/or issues of concern. Individuals were then given 5 "sticky dots" and asked to place them on the top priorities identified within their group. The facilitators then presented the top five priorities of each break-out group to the entire group. As in VA, the meeting format was well received by those at the meeting.

Top 5 Priorities (in priority order) for Each Break-Out Group:

Group 1: (only top 4 listed as they received nearly all of the "votes")

- Examine the speed at which oyster restoration can be implemented to achieve a sustainable oyster population.
- Evaluate the long-term effects of a non-native introduction into the Bay and beyond.
- Evaluate the potential coastwide effects (ecological, economic, social) utilizing hydrodynamic, larval transport, and other available models.
- Consider how current nutrient loads may hinder oyster restoration efforts.

Group 2: (only top 4 listed as there was a tie for the 5th priority for which those comments received only a couple of "votes" each)

- Complete EIS within one year, and commit the necessary resources to do so.
- Move slowly and carefully on completing the EIS.
- Evaluate how both C.v. and C.a. will perform under current water quality conditions.
- Establish partnership with watermen to build reefs and seed with disease resistant strains of C.v.

Group 3: (only top 4 listed, five way tie for the 5th priority for which those comments received only a couple of "votes" each)

- Introduce C.a. now.
- Explore alternative strategies for collecting and recovering previous planted dredge shell.
- Implement oyster harvest moratorium.
- Do not implement harvest moratorium, and consider using power dredges to cultivate the oyster bars.

Group 4:

- Complete EIS within one year.
- Verify if C.a. is truly disease resistant, and will not bring a new disease into the Bay.
- Conduct an experiment in Eastern Bay between Bodkin and Tilghman utilizing power dredges to cultivate oyster bars and attract natural spat set.
- Include nutrient removal benefit of oysters in cost-benefit analysis.
- Asian oysters can become very large, is there a commercial market for these large oysters, what if they get too big?

Group 5:

- Need more action on reducing the sediment load into the Bay to improve the status of oysters.
- Evaluate the use of larger reserve areas to restore the native oyster.
- Need more action to reduce the nutrient load into the Bay to improve the status of oysters.
- Expand native oyster restoration and repletion programs utilizing those strategies that have yielded positive results.
- Evaluate the interaction between C.a. and C.v., and the potential ecosystem impacts of introducing C.a.